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(54) Title: IMPROVEMENTS IN OR RELATING TO SWITCHING BETWEEN COMPRESSED BITSTREAMS

(57) Abstract

According to one aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method of switching from a first bitstream to a second bitstream, in a system having a decoder with a buffer through which the bitstream is transmitted, the method comprising: stopping the decoder from carrying out the decoding process in a predetermined manner at a predetermined point on the first bitstream, such that the buffer is substantially emptied; and restarting the decoder in a controlled manner at a predetermined position on the second bitstream, thereby switching from the first bitstream to the second bitstream. This invention allows insertion of additional programs, advertisements and the like into a standard MPEG stream without any of the disadvantages experienced using the hooks provided for in MPEG-2. One advantage of the proposed method is its simplicity. In terms of the MPEG-2 standard it requires intervention essentially only at the transport layer. The transport packet headers in MPEG-2 indicate the start of packets of elementary streams (PES packets). This flag is used for the control of all events in the switching process. The invention also allows for simple insertion of additional information in other types of bitstream.

